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Message Text

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43
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /013 W
---------- 015917
R 310900Z JUL 75
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3894

UNCLAS BUCHAREST 3679

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CFUS, RO
SUBJECT: CLAIMS: PICTURE BELONGING TO MRS. GUNTHER

REF: STATE 165583

1. WE HAVE BEEN SLOWER THAN WE HAD HOPED TO BE IN TRYING TO ASSIST MRS. ATHERTON IN RECOVERING THE PICTURE BELONGING TO HER LATE SISTER. PART OF THE PROBLEM HAS BEEN DETERMINING WHERE TO INTERVENE WITH THE BEST LIKELIHOOD OF USEFUL RESULTS. AMBASSADOR HAD CORRESPONDED WITH MRS. GUNTHER BEFORE HER DEATH AND HAS HAD LETTERS FROM MRS. ATHERTON THEREAFTER. IN ADDITION TO REPORT WHICH FOLLOWS ON LATEST DEVELOPMENTS, PLEASE TRANSMIT MY APOLOGIES TO MRS. ATHERTON FOR OUR NOT HAVING BEEN ABLE TO MOVE MORE RAPIDLY.

2. PAINTING INVOLVED IS SUNG DYNASTY PORTRAIT EVIDENTLY PURCHASED IN LONDON IN 1918 BY FRANKLIN MOTT GUNTHER, U.S. MINISTER TO ROMANIA FROM 1937 UNTIL HIS DEATH IN BUCHAREST IN 1941. HIS WIDOW LOUISA GUNTHER (SUBSEQUENTLY MARRIED ION FARCASANU) REMAINED IN BUCHAREST UNTIL EARLY 1942. ON HER DEPARTURE FROM HERE SHE ENTRUSTED THE PAINTING FOR SAFE-KEEPING WITH THE LATE GHEORGHE OPRESCU, A PROMINENT ROMANIAN ART CRITIC AND COLLECTOR WHO WAS DIRECTOR OF THE TOMA STELIAN MUSEUM. DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE OF THE TERMS OF THIS TRUST FROM MRS. GUNTHER TO OPRESCU IS NOT AVAILABLE ACCORDING TO VASILE ILEASA, DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELA-TIONS, COUNCIL FOR SOCIALIST CULTURE AND EDUCATION. ILEASA WROTE TO MRS. GUNTHER ABOUT THIS MATTER IN 1974 ADVISING HER THAT THE PAINTING WAS TRANSFERRED IN 1949 FROM THE STELIAN
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MUSEUM TO THE MUSEUM OF ART OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF

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ROMANIA AS PART OF THE ESTATE OF DR. MARIA STANCULEANU. COPY OF HIS LETTER BEING POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT ALONG WITH COPIES OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN AMBASSADOR AND MRS. GUNTHER AND MRS. ATHERTON AS WELL AS MEMO OF DISCUSSION BETWEEN EMBOFF AND OPRESCU MUSEUM OFFICIAL LAST MARCH.

3. EMBOFF MET WITH ILEASA ON TWO OCCASIONS LAST WEEK TO DISCUSS CASE AND TRANSMITTED PHOTOS OF PAINTING AND AFFIDAVIT SENT TO AMBASSADOR BY MRS. ATHERTON. AMBASSADOR ALSO DISCUSSED CASE WITH COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT ION DODU BALAN ON JULY 29. ILEASA AND BALAN IN THEIR SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS ASSURED US THAT COUNCIL IS CONTINUING ITS RESEARCH WITH APPROPRIATE MUSEUM AUTHORITIES IN AN ATTEMPT TO LOCATE ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE REGARDING TITLE TO THE PAINTING. IN RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S SUGGESTION, BALAN AGREED THAT THE COUNCIL AND EMBASSY SHOULD SEEK TO ESTABLISH MUTUALLY AGREED UPON CRITERIA FOR CLARIFYING TITLE.

4. WE WILL CONTACT THE COUNCIL ONCE AGAIN FOLLOWING THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT THIS WEEK-END AND KEEP THE DEPARTMENT APPRAISED OF DEVELOPMENTS. WE ARE SEEKING TO CLARIFY HOW PAINTING BECAME PART OF STANCULEANU ESTATE (PARA 2) AND WILL REPORT UR FINDINGS.BARNES

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